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MILITARY INTELLIGENCE DIVISION W. D. G. S.

NEW YORK OFFICE MID **MILITARY ATTACHE REPORT** U.S.S.R. (Country reported on)

Subject: Polish Officers in U. S. S. R. (Brief descriptive title) I. G. No. 6950

From M. A. Report No. 11550 Date 9 November 1943

Source and degree of reliability: Marian Mermel, former Lieutenant in the Polish, later French, and British Armies. Arrived in U. S. as merchant seaman 28 October 1943. Reliability: C-3

SUMMARY.—Here enter careful summary of report, containing substance succinctly stated; include important facts, names, places, dates, etc.

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Reference Report No. 11551 By Date

Source explains his reasons for believing that the Soviets have executed many Polish officers, prisoners of war.

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Source was born in Jaslo Poland in August 1916. Graduated from the Cadet School in Lwów in 1935 and from the Officers' School in Ostrów-Komorowo in 1937. Was second Lieutenant in the 77th Regiment in Lida from graduation to 1 September 1939 when he was transferred west to Piotrków where he fought the Germans on 3 September. Took part in the following battles: Radom, about 7 September; Garwolin, 16 September; Lublin, 18 September.

Source's regiment did not know that on 17 September the Soviets had invaded Poland. Thus when the Polish patrols east of Kowel finally encountered the Red Patrols they were greatly surprised and there was firing until General Sasabowski, the divisional commander, ordered them not to fight the Russians but to retire west again to Janów, where source's company engaged the Germans on 29 September, and where he was wounded by shrapnel in the forehead (the scar is clearly visible).

Source did not regain consciousness for 48 hours, until he looked up at a Soviet nurse on a hospital train going east. The Russians had picked him up where he lay on the battlefield of Janów. He slowly recovered in a hospital in Odessa whence after six weeks he was moved to a prison camp in Kiev.

The soldiers used by the Russians against Poland were ragged and dirty and ill-equipped. Source now thinks this was a blind, in order not to let any westerners know how well the Red Army really was. The common soldiers too, had evidently learned their lesson well from the commissars, because on the hospital train the Russian privates told their Polish prisoners that they would "not fight against the Germans for they are our friends". This was of course, discouraging to the Poles.

The prison in Kiev was not equipped with the simplest facilities for hygiene. Source had to sleep all winter in the same shirt he had been wounded in. The food was very poor; soup, bread, and potatoes. Many prisoners died of typhus, made worse by the vermin and the fact that they received no soap. Source has heard from Poles who have escaped from Nazi prison camps, that they were given soap and warmer blankets and that the surroundings were far cleaner.

On the other hand, there were no beatings or what might be called intentional cruelties in the Soviet camp.

Many prisoners in Kiev were injured by the cold that winter, lost a hand or a foot. In the terrible Russian winter only one blanket apiece was issued them. Source has later heard in England that the incidence of tuberculosis is high among the Poles who come out of Russia. Prisoners have to spend the winter in tents, which is unendurable in a Russian winter. When they come out, the Polish Government often cannot use them and the British have to provide sanatoria for them.

#### Treatment of Officers

If the treatment of privates was not intentionally cruel, it was different with the officers. The Bolsheviks introduced Polish-speaking spies-usually Ukrainian and White Russians-into

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the camp, who, it was soon found out, were looking for the officers. So that they would not be recognized as officers, the Poles tried to tear off their insignia of rank, roughen the ~~CLASSIFICATION CHANGED TO~~ ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ ~~Security Information~~ their faces.

The 10,000 Polish Officers

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By \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

In response to a question as to his opinion as to the truth of the charge that the Soviets had murdered 10,000 Polish officers, source said it was his considered opinion that they had done so. Pressed for his reasons he stated them as follows:

1.) Source knows that when the Russians entered Poland they killed many policemen and lawyers from Lwow especially, persons who had been active in Poland's fight against Communism.

2.) In the prison camp in Kiev, source recalls that several officers were "missing" every day. These officers have never shown up in any part of the world. Since the Polish authorities in every country register every officer who enters that country, some at least of these men would have escaped unless they had been killed outright.

3.) In the prison the inmates were constantly asked to show their hands as though the guards were looking for members of the intelligentsia. Those with soft hands were never seen again.

4.) Source learned later from his own God-mother, that his God-father, Wilczak, mayor of a little town near Jaslo by the name of Czencienica, was shot by the Reds in the following manner: Since he was fat and had many official documents, his captors knew he was a bourgeois and they considered that a sufficient crime, for which he was immediately shot, in spite of his prayers and protestations. This murder was witnessed by a peasant who took the news to source's God-mother directly.

#### ESCAPE

When on 24 February 1940 the guards at the Kiev camp were changed, source escaped in the confusion and walked hundreds of miles to the west to his mother's home near Katowice in German Poland. After a short stay with his family he decided to leave and armed with false papers he went via Vienna to a spot two stations from the Hungarian border where he made his way through the woods to Hungary, Yugoslavia, Greece, to Syria, where he joined the famous Carpathian Brigade, described in Report No. 11551.

After source's service with the Carpathian Brigade, he was sent with 200 other Polish officers via the Cape of Good Hope to England where he was shortly discharged from the Polish Army, ostensibly because there was a surplus of officers, but really,

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he thinks, because he was the nephew of Bobkowsk, "Pilsudski" vice-minister of communications until September 1939.

For the last two and one half years source has been an A. B. seaman in the Polish merchant marine, making many trips between Halifax and Liverpool. He landed in New York on 28 October 1943 and now resides at 1730 West 18th Street, Chicago.

Report prepared by:  
A. P. Coleman

EDWARD L. BARLOW  
Lt. Colonel, G. S. C.

SCOTT

When on 22 February 1940 the guards at the Kiev camp were changed, source escaped in the confusion and mixed hundreds of miles to the west to his mother's home near Kovel in German Poland. After a short stay with his family he decided to leave and armed with false papers he went via Vienna to a boat on the Danube River. He made his way through the woods to Hungary, Yugoslavia, Greece, to Spain, where he joined the Spanish Government forces, described as being the 11th.

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